DRAMATIC LEGENDS AND OTHER POEMS

PADRAIC COLUM

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DRAMATIC LEGENDS AND OTHER POEMS

By
Padraic Colum

Wild Earth
Mogu the Wanderer, or the Desert
The Adventures of Odysseus
and the Tale of Troy
The Golden Fleece
The King of Ireland's Son
The Children of Odin
The Boy Who Knew What the Birds Said
The Girl Who Sat by the Ashes
The Boy Apprenticed to an Enchanter
The Children Who Followed the Piper

DRAMATIC LEGENDS AND OTHER POEMS

By

PADRAIC COLUM

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DEDICATION
To M. C. M. C.

The well—
They come to it and take
Their cup-full or their palms-full out of it.

The well—
Stones are around it, and an elder bush
Is there; a high rowan tree; and so
The well is marked.

Who knows
Whence come the waters? Through what passages
Beneath? From what high tors
Where forests are? Forests dripping rain!
Branches pouring to the ground; trunks, barks, roots,
Letting the streamlets down: Through the dark earth
The water flows, and in that secret flood
That's called a spring, that finds this little hollow.
Who knows
Whence come the waters that fill cup and palm?

Sweetheart and comrade, I give you
The waters' marches and the forest's bound,
The valley-filling cloud, the trees that set
The rains beneath their roots, out of this well.

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SECTIONS IN DRAMATIC LYRICS AND OTHER POEMS

1. Poems: Country Songs 1
2. Creatures and Things Seen 21
3. Reminiscence 31
4. Dramatic Legends 55
   - Swift's Pastoral 57
   - The Bird of Jesus 65
   - The Laments of Queen Gormlai . . 68
   - The Miracle of the Corn 74

POEMS: COUNTRY SONGS

TO A POET

Below there are white-faced throngs,
Their march is a tide coming nigher;
Below there are white-faced throngs,
Their faith is a banner flung higher;
Below there are white-faced throngs,
White swords they have yet, but red
songs;
Place and lot they have lost—hear
you not?
For a dream you once dreamed, and
forgot!

THE STAR

A mighty star has drawn a-near, and is
Now vibrant in the air:
The trembling, half-divested trees of his
Bright presence are aware.

And I behold him in the stream, and see
Him pass from marge to main:
What dust will be my flesh and bone ere he,
That star, is there again!

LEGEND

There is an hour, they say,
On which your dream has power:
Then all you wish for comes,
As comes the lost field-bird
Down to the island-lights;
There is an hour, they say,
That 's woven with your wish:
In dawn, or dayli' gone,
In mirk-dark, or at noon,
In hush, or hum of day,
May be that secret hour.

A herd-boy in the rain,
Who looked o'er stony fields;
A young man in a street,
When fife and drum went by,
Making the sunlight shrill;
A girl in a lane,
When the long June twilight
Made friendly, far-off things,
Had watch upon the hour:
The dooms they met are in
The song my grand-dam sings.

MEN ON ISLANDS

Can it be that never more
Men will grow on Islands?
Ithaka and Eriskey,
Iceland and Tahiti!
Must the engines he has forged
Raven so for spaces,
That the Islands dwindle down,
Dwindle down!—
Pots that shelve the tap-root's
growth?
Must it be that never more
Men will flower on Islands?
Crete and Corsica, Mitylene,
Aran and Iona!

GILDEROY

The Smith who made the manacles,
With bar and bolt, and link and ring,
Sang out above his hearty blows—
"I can't have grief for everything."

As Roger by the rope-walk went
The bramble bird cheeped up to sing;

He cut the wanted coil, and said—
"I can't have grief for everything."

The Lad who came to Ladder Lane,
And saw his hemp cravat a-string—
"Jack's doom's Jill's dole, but then,"
said he,
"I can't have grief for everything."

And I who carried bag and wig,
Looked up and saw him turn and swing;
The dog he gave fixed eyes on me—
Can I have grief for everything?

THE RUNE-MASTER[1]

Arch-scholar they 'll call you,
Kuno Meyer;
One knowing the word
Behind the word;
Man of learning,
And of the world too,
The century's child.

But who will tell them
Of the blackbird
That your heart held?

On an old thorn-tree
By an ancient rath
You heard him sing,
And with runes you charmed him
Till he stayed with you,
Giving clear song.

He sang o'er all
That Maravaun
Told King Guiré;
And he told you how
Bran heard the singing
Of a lovely woman
And sailed for Faerie;
And of how slain princes
Kept tryst with women
Loved beyond
The pain of death,
In days when still
The boat of Mananaun
Bore towards Eirinn!

Arch-scholar they'll call you—
Nay, Rune-master!
You read in texts
Not words only,
But runes of old time;

And when you spoke them
A curlew cried
Over grass-waste Tara,
And a cuckoo called
From the height of Cashel,
And an eagle flew
From Emain Macha!

Ochone, ochone!
That we'll see no more
In the Eastern, or
The Western World
Your great head over
The lectern bending,
Nor hear your lore
By a pleasant fireside.

But the runes you 've read
Have given us more
Than the sword might win us:
May kind saints of Eirinn
Be beside you
Where birds on the Living
Tree sing the Hours.

T. M. K.

Thorough waters, thorough nations I have
come
To lay last offerings at your low abode,
Brother, and to appeal
To ashes that were you.

Since that which none can check has borne
you
From my regard, poor brother, take these
gifts—
The tokens that are due
To ancient pieties.

Yet they are wet, and over-wet with tears,
With brother's tears; and now I say Farewell:
Henceforth, and for all time
Hail, Brother, and Farewell!

ON THE DEATH OF ROGER CASEMENT

They have hanged Roger Casement to the
tolling of a bell,
Ochone, och, ochone, ochone!

And their Smiths, and their Murrays, and their Cecils say it 's well,
Ochone, och, ochone, ochone!
But there are outcast peoples to lift that spirit high,
Flayed men and breastless women who labored fearfully,
And they will lift him, lift him, for the eyes of God to see,
And it's well, after all, Roger Casement!

They have ta'en his strangled body and have flung it in a pit,
Ochone, och, ochone, ochone!
And fire of the quicklime is what they've brought to it,
Ochone, och, ochone, ochone!
To waste that noble stature, that grave and brightening face,
The princely favor also, and the high Castilian grace—
Putting courtesy and kindliness from eminence of place—
But they — they die to dust,
While 't was yours to die to fire, Roger Casement!

WANDERING AND SOJOURNING[2]

Spring

Now, coming on Spring, the days will be growing,
And after Saint Bride's Day my sail I will throw;
Since the thought has come to me I fain would be going,
Till I stand in the middle of the County Mayo!

The first of my days will be spent in Claremorris,
And in Balla, beside it, I'll have drinking and sport;
To Kiltimagh, then, I will go on a visit,
And there, I can tell you, a month will be short.

I solemnly swear that the heart in me rises,
As the wind rises up and the mists break below,
When I think upon Carra, and on Gallen down from it,
The Bush of the Mile, and the Plains of Mayo!

Killeadean 's my village, and every good 's in it,
The rasp and blackberry to set to one's tooth;
And if Raftery stood in the midst of his people,
Old age would go from him, and he 'd step to his youth!

Autumn

A good stay-at-home season is Autumn; then there's work to be done by all:
Speckled fawns, where the brackens make covert, range away undeterred;
And stags that were seen upon hillocks, now give heed to the call,
To the bellowing call of the hinds, and they draw back to the herd.

A good stay-at-home season is Autumn; the brown world 's marked into fields;
The corn is up to its growth; the acorns teem in the wood;
By the side of the down-fallen fort even the thornbush yields
A crop, and there by the rath the hazel nuts drop from a load.

THE POOR GIRL'S MEDITATION[3]

I am sitting here,
Since the moon rose in the night;
Kindling a fire,
And striving to keep it alight:
The folk of the house are lying
In slumber deep;
The cocks will be crowing soon:
The whole of the land is asleep.

May I never leave this world
Until my ill-luck is gone;
Till I have cows and sheep,
And the lad that I love for my own:
I would not think it long,
The night I would lie at his breast,
And the daughters of spite, after that,
Might say the thing they liked best.

Love covers up hate,
If a girl have beauty at all:
On a bed that was narrow and high,
A three-month I lie by the wall:
When I bethought on the lad
That I left on the brow of the hill,

I wept from dark until dark,
And my cheeks have the tear-tracks still.

And, O, young lad that I love,
I am no mark for your scorn:
All you can say of me
Is undowered I was born:
And if I've no fortune in hand,
Nor cattle nor sheep of my own,
This I can say, O lad,
I am fitted to lie my lone!

LAMENT

I walk by the shore of a lake
Where stones drag wet through a wood,
And I hear the cry of a bird—
Lone, lone.

It cries to the lake, and it cries
To the stones, and it cries to the wood,
And it cries to my own slow blood—
Lone, lone.

And once I walked by this lake,
And I heard a like cry from a bird,
Nor knew what its grief forebode—
Gone, gone.

Now the child who gathered the nuts,
And brought them to me through the
wood—
The child who gathered the nuts,
That day, from our life is gone.

THE SISTER'S LULLABY

You would not slumber
If laid at my breast:
You would not slumber.

My thoughts are strayed birds,
My blood is possessed:
You would not slumber.

The rain-drops encumber
The hawthorn's crest:
You would not slumber.

The river flood beats
The swan from her nest:
You would not slumber.

Times without number
Has called the woodquest:
Times without number.

As oft as she called
To me you were pressed:
  Times without number.

Now you 'd not slumber
If laid at my breast
  Times without number.

O starling reed-resting,
I 'll rock you to rest:
  So you will slumber.

OLD SOLDIER

We wander now who marched before,
Hawking our bran from door to door,
While other men from the mill take their flour:
  So it is to be an Old Soldier.

Old and sore, one 's like the hound
Turning upon the stiff frozen ground,
Nosing the mould, with the night around:
  So it is to be an Old Soldier.

And we who once rang out like a bell,
Have nothing now to show or to sell;
Old bones to carry, old stories to tell:
  So it is to be an Old Soldier.

THE WIFE OF TONE[4]

My son I reared as might the brooding partridge
Rear up an eaglet fall'n from storm-struck-nest:
My son, ah no! one captained for high conflict,
My chieftain-husband's heir and his bequest.

No mother's part in him did my soul treasure,
And he would go, and I could stand alone;
Ah, so I thought, but now my heart-strings measure
The love, the loss—my son, my little son, thou 'rt gone!

I see the grey road winding, winding from me,
And thou upon it exiled and away,
I turn unto the darkened house beside me—
Ah, dark this day as on Wolfe Tone's death's day!

But no, no, no! Up from the sod that 's by me,
Up, up, with glorious singing springs the lark—
'Tis Wolfe Tone's spirit, his, to reconcile me,
And in a sword-flash, gone, the loneliness, the dark!

THE FAIR HILLS OF EIRÉ

Bear the love of my heart to my land far away,
And the fair hills of Eiré O,
And to all of Eivir's race that in her valleys stay,
And the fair hills of Eiré O.
That land of mine beloved, where the brown thrush's song
Fills hazel glen and ivied close the Summer twilight long:
Oh, how woeful swells his music for the downfall of the Strong,
On the fair hills of Eiré O!

'Tis my lone soul's long sorrow that I must still be far
From the fair hills of Eiré O,
Nor watch a maiden coming as through the mist a star,
On the fair hills of Eiré O!

Oh, the honey in her tree-tops where her
oak-woods darkly grow,
And the freshness of her cresses where her
clear well-waters flow,
And the lushness of her meadows where her
soft-eyed cattle low,
On the fair hills of Eiré O!

SHALL I GO BOUND AND YOU GO FREE?

"Shall I go bound and you go free,
And love one so removed from me?
Not so; the falcon o'er my brow
Hath better quest, I dare avow!

"And must I run where you will ride,
And must I stay where you abide?
Not so, the feather that I wear
Is from an Eyrne in the air!

"And must I climb a broken stair,
And must I pace a chamber bare?
Not so, the Brenny plains are wide,
And there are banners where I ride!"

CREATURES AND THINGS SEEN

THE WILD ASS

The wild ass lounges, legs struck out
In vagrom unconcern:
The tombs of Achæmedian kings
Are for those hooves to spurn.

And all of rugged Tartary
Lies with him on the ground,
The Tartary that knows no awe,
That has nor ban nor bound.

The wild horse from the herd is plucked
To bear a saddle's weight;
The boar is one keeps covert, and
The wolf runs with a mate;

But he's the solitary of space,
Curbless and unbeguiled;
The only being that bears a heart
Not recreant to the wild.

THE VULTURES

Foul-feathered and scald-necked,
They sit in evil state;
Raw marks upon their breasts
As on men's wearing chains.

Impure, though they may plunge
Into the morning's springs,
And spirit-dulled, though they
Command the heavens' heights.

Angels of Foulness, ye,
So fierce against the dead!
Sloth on your muffled wings,
And speed within your eyes!

THE BISON

How great a front is thine—
A lake of majesty!
Assyria knew the sign—
The god-incarnate king!

A lake of majesty—
The lion's drowns in it!
And thy placidity—
A moon within that lake!

As if thou still dost own
A world, thou takest breath—
Earth-shape, and strength of stone,
A Titan-sultan's child!

THE PIGEONS

Odalisques, odalisques,
Treading the pavement
With feet pomegranate-stained:
When we 'd less years
We bartered for, bought you—
Ah, then, we knew you,
Odalisques, odalisques,
Treading the pavement
With feet pomegranate-stained!

Queens of the air,—
Aithra, Iole,
Eos or Auge,
Taking new beauty
From the sun's evening brightness,
Gyring in light
As nymphs play in waters—
Aithra, Iole,
Eos or Auge!

Then down on our doorsteps,
Gretchen and Dora . . .

THE BIRD OF PARADISE

With sapphire for her crown,
And with the Libyan wine
For lustre of her eyes;
With azure for her feet
(It is her henna stain);
Then iris for her vest,
Rose, ebony, and flame,
She lives a thing enthralled,
In forests that are old,
As old as is the moon.

THE HUMMING BIRD

Up from the navel of the world,
Where Cuzco has her founts of fire,
The passer of the Gulf he comes.

He lives in air, a bird of fire,
Charted by flowers still he comes,
Through spaces that are half the world.

With glows of suns and seas he comes;
A life within our shadowed world
That's bloom, and gem, and kiss of fire!

THE MONKEYS

Two little creatures
With faces the size of
A pair of pennies
Are clasping each other:
"Ah, do not leave me,"
One says to the other,
In the high monkey-
Cage in the beast-shop.

There are no people
To gape at them now,
For people are loth to
Peer in the dimness;
Have they not builded
Streets and playhouses,
Sky-signs and bars
To lose the loneliness
Shaking the hearts
Of the two little monkeys?

Yes. But who watches
The penny-small faces
Can hear the voices:
"Ah, do not leave me;
Suck I will give you,

Warmth and clasping,
And if you slip from
This beam, I can never
Find you again."

Dim is the evening,
And chill is the weather;
There, drawn from their colored
Hemisphere,
The apes liliputian
With faces the size of
A pair of pennies,
And voices as low as
The flow of my blood.

IN THE CAROLINA WOODS

Not in a cavern where the winds
Trample with battle call—
But in these woods, in these deep woods
Where branch and branch let fall
Not moss, but grey and cobweb beards,
Kings' cabalistic beards—

Here you should lie, you kings of eld,
Barbarossa, Boabdil,

And Czar Lazar, and Charlemagne; Arthur
and Gaelic Finn —
Here where the muffling Spanish moss
Forests with forests fill.

AN INDIAN SHOWING FEATS

The quickness that he won in the death
chase,
Out on the plains, five hundred moons
ago;
The hardness wrought by hungers, and the
skill
That notched the hardness, arrow to that
bow:

He shows them these, while these depart
from him,
Like warriors softly shod, with bodies bent;
They reach the mesa bluff; around it howl
Coyotes, in long, lonely discontent.

THE HORNET'S NEST

—How strangely like a churchyard skull,
The thing that 's there amongst the leaves!

—A hornet's nest; but stir the branch
And they 'll be round your head and ears!

—Livid, uneyed, articulate,
How like a skull their nests are made!

—How like to hornets' nests the skulls
On many a one that still has flesh!

REMINISCENCE

REMINISCENCE

I

The Swallows sang

Alien to us are
  Your fields, and your cotes, and your glebes;
Secret our nests are
  Although they be built in your eaves;
Uneaten by us are
  The grains that grow in your fields.

The Weathercock on the barn answered

Not alien to ye are
  The powers of un-earth-bound beings:
Their curse ye would bring
  On our cotes, and our glebes, and our fields,
If aught should befall
  The brood that is bred in the eaves.

The Swallows answered

If aught should befall
  Our brood that 's not traveled the seas,

Your temples would fall,
And blood ye would milk from your beeves:
Against them the curse we would bring
Of un-earth-bound beings!

II

The blackbird there was singing,
"Oh, now you know my sort;
I 'd rather have a guinea
Than I would a five pound note.

"For a guinea it would sink,
And a note it would swim;
And yellow is a guinea,
And yellow is my bill.

"And since you 've heard my singing,
And since you know my sort,
You 'd better leave your guinea,
And take your five pound note."

III

I saw the wind to-day:
I saw it in the pane
Of glass upon the wall:

A moving thing, — 'twas like
No bird with widening wing,
No mouse that runs along
The meal bag under the beam.

I think it like a horse,
All black, with frightening mane,
That springs out of the earth,
And tramples on his way.
I saw it in the glass,
The shaking of a mane:
A horse that no one rides!

IV

Meet for a town where pennies have few pairs
In children's pockets, this toy-booth with its wares—
Jew's harps and masks and kites,
And paper-lanterns with their farthen-lights,
All in a dim-lit window to be seen;
Within—
The walls that have the patches of the damp,
The counter where there burns the murky lamp,
And then, the counter and the shelf between—
The dame,
Meager, grey-polled, lame.

So she is here since times legendary—
A bird of little worth, a sparrow, say,
Whose crib 's in some neglected passage-way,
And one 's left wondering who brings crumbs
to her;
Soft-voiced and friendly-spoken, she will hop
The inches of her crib, this narrow shop
When you step in to be her customer.

How's custom? Bad enough; she had not
sold
Six kites this windy year for boys to hold—
She sold kites by the gross in times agone;
Marbles, none at all—
The children had no money to make call.
Wasn't it poor, the town,
Where boys
Could not buy marbles, leaving other toys
Like tops and balls—
Where little girls could hardly pay for dolls?

But she's not tragical—no, not a bit—
She laughs as she talks to you—that is it!
Her eyes are like the farthen-candle's light
In paper-lanterns when they burn bright;
And she herself is like a kite upborne,
A paper-kite held by a string that's worn;

And like a Jew's harp when you strike its
tongue—
That way her voice goes on!

Well, Miler Dowdall, the great pugilist,
Who had the world once beneath his fist,
Would step in here to buy his pockets full;
We used to see him with deft hands held up
To win the champion's belt or silver cup,
Upon the hoardings on our way to school;
Now Miler's is a name that 's blown by!

How strange to think that she is still inside
After so many turns of the tide—
Since this lit window was a dragon's eye
To turn us all to wonder coming nigh—
Since this dim window was a dragon's eye!

V

Over old walls the Laburnums
hang cones of fire;
Laburnums that grow out of old
mould in old gardens:

Old men and old maids who have money or
pensions
Have shuttered themselves in the pales of old
gardens.

The gardens grow wild; out of their mould the Laburnums
Draw cones of fire.

And we, who 've no lindens, no palms, no cedars of Lebanon,
Rejoice you have gardens with mould, old men and old maids:

The bare and the dusty streets have now the Laburnums,
Have now cones of fire!

VI

Down a street that once I lived in
You used pass, a honey-seller,
And the town in which that street was
Was the shabbiest of all places;
You were different from the others
Who went by to barter meanly:
Different from the man with colored
Windmills for the children's pennies;
Different from the drab purveyor
With her paper screens to fill up
Chill and empty fireplaces.
You went by, a man upstanding,
On your head a wide dish, holding

Dark and golden lumps of honey;
You went slowly, like an old horse
That 's not driven any longer,
But that likes to take an amble.
No one ever bought your honey,
No one ever paid a penny
For a single comb of sweetness;
Every house was grim unto you
With foregone desire of eating
Bread whose taste had sweet of honey.
Yet you went, a man contented
'S though you had a king to call on
Who would take you to his parlor,
And buy all your stock of honey.
On you went, and in a sounding
Voice just like the bell of evening,
Told us of the goods you carried,
Told us of the dark and golden
Treasure dripping on your wide dish.

You went by, and no one named you!

VII

"The bond-woman comes to the boorie;
She sings with a heart grown wild,
How a hundred rivers are flowing
Between herself and her child.

"Then comes the lad with the hazel,
And the folding-star is in the rack;
'Night 's a good herd' to the cattle,
He sings 'She brings all things back.' "

VIII

The crows still fly to that wood, and out of
that wood she comes,
Carrying her load of sticks, a little less now
than before,
Her strength being less; she bends as the
hoar rush bends in the wind;
She will sit by the fire, in the smoke, her
thoughts on the root and the living
branch no more.

The crows still fly to that wood, that wood
that is sparse and gapped;
The last one left of the herd makes way by
the lane to the stall,
Lowing distress as she goes; the great trees
there are all down;
No fiddle sounds in the hut to-night, and a
candle only gives light to the hall.

The trees are sparse and gapped, yet a
sapling spreads on the joints

Of the wall, till the castle stones fall down
into the moat:
The last one who minds that our race once
stood as a spreading tree,
She goes, and thorns are bare, where the
blackbird, his full songs done, strikes
one metal note.

IX

The Mountain Thrush I say,
But I am thinking of her, Nell the Rambler:
She 'd come down to our houses bird-alone,
From some haunt that was hers, and we would
see her
Drawing the water from the well one day,
For one house or another, or we 'd hear her
Garrulous with the turkeys down the street,
We children.

From neighbour's house to neighbour's house
she 'd go
Until one day we 'd see
Her worn cloak hanging behind our door;
And then, that night, we 'd hear
Of Earl Gerald: how he rides abroad,
His horse's hooves shod with the weighty
silver,

And how he 'll ride all roads till those silver
shoes
Are worn thin;
As thin as the cat's ears before the fire,
Upraised in such content before the fire,
And making little lanterns in the firelight.

The Mountain Thrush, when every way 's a
hard one,
Hops on in dumbness till a patch of sunlight,
Falling, will turn her to a wayside song:
So it was with her, Rambler Nell, a shelter,
A bit upon the board, and she flowed on
With rambler's discourse—tales, and rhymes,
and sayings,
With child's light in her worn eyes, and
laughter
To all her words.

The lore she had—
'Twas like a kingly robe, on which long rains
Have fallen and fallen, and parted
The finely woven web, and have washed away
The kingly colors, but have left some threads
Still golden, and some feathers still as shining
As the kingfisher's. While she sat there, not
spinning,

Not weaving anything but her own fancies,
We ate potatoes out of the ash, and thought
them
Like golden apples out of Tiprobane.

When winter's over-long, and days that
famish
Come one upon another like snow-flakes,
The Mountain Thrush makes way down to
our houses:
Takes doorstep-shelter,
Hops round for crumbs, and stays a while a
comer
Upon our floors.

She did not think
Bread of dependence bitter; three went with
her—
Hunger, Sorrow, and Loneliness, and they
Had crushed all that makes claims, though
they'd not bent her,
Nor emptied her of trust—what was it led
her
From house to house, but that she always
looked for
A warmer welcome at the hearth ahead?

So she went on until it came one day
The Mountain Thrush's heart-stop on the way.

X

An old man said, "I saw
The chief of the things that are gone;
A stag with head held high,
A doe, and a fawn;

"And they were the deer of Ireland
That scorned to breed within bound:
The last; they left no race
Tame on a pleasure ground.

"A stag, with his hide all rough
With the dew, and a doe and a fawn;
Nearby, on their track on the mountain
I watched them, two and one,

"Down to the Shannon going—
Did its waters cease to flow,
When they passed, they that carried the swiftness,
And the pride of long ago?

"The last of the troop that had heard
Finn's and Oscar's cry;
A doe and a fawn, and before,
A stag with head held high!"

XI

"A Stranger you came to me over the Sea,
But welcome I made you, Seumas-a-ree,
And shelter I gave you, my sons set to ward you,
Red war I faced for you, Seumas-a-ree.

"Now a craven you go from me, over the sea,
But my best sons go with you, Seumas-a-ree;
Foreign graves they will gain, and for those who remain
The black hemp is sown—och, Seumas-a-ree!

"But the Boyne shall flow back from the far Irish Sea,
On the causeway of Aughrim our victory shall be:
Two centuries of years and the child on the knee
Will be rocked to this cronach, Seumas-a-ree!"

XII

You blew in
Where Jillin Brady kept up state on nothing,
Married her daughter, and brought to Jillin's house
A leash of dogs, a run of ferrets, a kite
In a wired box; linnets and larks and goldfinches
In their proper cages, and you brought with you this song:

If you come to look for me,
Perhaps you 'll not me find:
For I 'll not in my Castle be—
Inquire where horns wind.

Before I had a man-at-arms
I had an eager hound:
Then was I known as Reynardine,
In no crib to be found.

You used to say
Five hounds' lives were a man's life, and when Teague
Had died of old age, and when Fury that was a pup
When Teague was maundering, had turned from hill to hearth
And lay in the dimness of a hound's old age,

I went with you again, and you were upright
As the circus rider standing on his horse;
Quick as a goat that will take any path, and
lean—
Lean as a lash; you would have no speech
With wife or child or mother-in-law, till you
Were out of doors and standing on the ditch,
Ready to face the river or the hill—
The Hen-wife's son once heard the
grouse
Talk to his soft-voiced mate;
And what he heard the heath-poult
say,
The loon would not relate.

Impatient in the yard he grew,
And patient on the hill;
Of cocks and hens he 'd take no
charge,
And he went with Reynardine.

Lean days when we were idle as the birds,
That will not preen their feathers, but will
travel
To taste a berry, or pull a shred of wool
That they will never use. We pass the
bounds:
A forest's grave, the black bog, is before us,

And in its very middle you will show me
The snipe's nest that is lonelier than the snipe
That 's all that 's there; and then a stony hill,
A red fox climbing, pausing, looking round his tail
At us travailing against wind and rain
To reach the river-spring where Finn or Fergus
Hardened a spear, back of a thousand years.

And still your cronies are what they were then—
The hounds that know the hill and know the hearth;
(One is Fury that 's as old as Argos now
That crawled to Odysseus coming back);
Your minstrels, the blackbird singing still
When kites are leaving, crows are going home,
And the thrush in the morning like a spectre showing
Beside the day-spring; and your visitors,
The cuckoo that will swing upon a branch,
The corncrake with quick head between the grass-tufts.

And still your song is what it used to be—
About that Reynardine who came to lord
A Castle (O that Castle with its trees!),
Who heard the horns, and let his turret grow
The foxglove where his banner should be seen:

The hawk is for the hill, he cried,
The badger for the glen;
The otter for the river-pools—
Amen, amen, amen!

XIII

It would not be far for us to go back to the age of bronze:
Then you were a King's daughter; your father had curraghs on shore,
A herd of horses, good tillage upon the face of the hills,
And clumps of cattle beyond them—the black and broad-horned kine.

And I, I was good at the bow, but had no men, no herds,
And you would have been bestowed in a while on some unrenowned

Ulysses, or on the old King to whom they
afterwards raised
Three stones as high as the elk's head (this
cromlech where we now sit).

How fair you were when you walked there
beside the old forest trees!
So fair that I thought you would change and
fly away a white swan!
And then we were mates for play; all-eagle
thereafter you grew
To drive me to range the tempest, King's
child of the hero-age!

I called three times as an owl: through the
gaps where the herders watched
You ran, and we climbed the height where
the brackens pushed at our knees;
And we lay where the brackens drew the
earth-smell out of the earth,
And we journeyed and baffled the fighters of
ill-wishing Kings!

It would not be far for us to go back to the
age of bronze!
The fire left there by the nomads is lone as a
burning ship!

We eat them as we fare along, green ears of
the wild wheat;
At last, a King, I relieve a good clan from a
dragon's spleen!

Pieces of amber I brought you, big as a bow-
man's thumbs,
Trumpets I left beside you, wrought when the
smiths had all art,
A dancing-bird that I caught you—they are
in the age of bronze:
I bring you; you bring me again, the love, the
triumph, the strife!

XIV

"The blackbird's nest in the briar,
The sea-gulls' nests on the ground—
They're nests, and they're more than nests,"
said he,
"They are tokens I have found.

"Here, where the rain-dashed briar is
A mark in the empty glade,
The blackbird's nest is seen," he said,
"Clay-rimmed, uncunningly made;

"By the inland lake, its shore,
Where the surgeless water shoves,
The sea-gulls have their nests," he said,
As low as the cattles' hooves."

I heard a poet say it,
The sojourner of a night;
His head was up to the rafter,
Where he stood in a candle's light.

"Your houses are like the sea-gulls'
Nests—they are scattered and low;
Like the blackbirds' nests in the briar," he said,
"Uncunningly made—even so.

"But close to the ground are reared
The wings that have widest sway,
And the birds that sing best in the wood," he said,
"Were bred with their breasts to the clay.

"You 've wildness—I 've turned it to song;
You 've strength—I 've turned it to wings;
The welkin 's for your conquest then,
The wood to your music rings;

"Till your salt shall lose its savor,
And your virgin soil be cropped;
Till you own like other peoples;
And the breath of your need be stopped."

I heard a poet say it,
The sojourner of a night;
His head was up to the rafter
Where he stood in a candle's light.

DRAMATIC LEGENDS

SWIFT'S PASTORAL

A story that has for its background Saint Patrick's Purgatory.

CHARACTERS: *Jonathan Swift and Esther Vanhomrigh.*

ESTHER
I know the answer: 'tis ingenious.
I 'm tired of your riddles, Doctor Swift.

SWIFT
Faith, so am I.

ESTHER
But that 's no reason why you 'll be splenetic.

SWIFT
Then let us talk.

ESTHER
But will you talk, too? Oh, is there nothing
For you to show your pupil on this highway?

SWIFT
The road to Dublin, and the road that leads
Out of this sunken island.

ESTHER
I see a Harper:
A Harper and a country lout, his fellow,
Upon the highway.

SWIFT
I know the Harper.

ESTHER
The Doctor knows so much, but what of that?
He 'll stay splenetic.

SWIFT
I have seen this Harper
On many a road. I know his name, too—
I know a story that they tell about him.

ESTHER
And will it take the pucker off his brow
If Cadenus to Vanessa tell the tale?

SWIFT
God knows it might! His name 's O'Caro-
lan—
Turlough O'Carolan; and there is a woman
To make the story almost pastoral.

ESTHER
Some Sheelah or some Oonagh, I 'll engage.

SWIFT
Her name
Was Bridget Cruise. She would not wed him,
And he wed one who had another name,
And made himself a Minstrel, but a Minstrel
Of consequence. His playing on the harp
Was the one glory that in Ireland stayed
After lost battles and old pride cast down.
Where he went men would say:
"Horses we may not own, nor swords may carry,
But Turlough O'Carolan plays upon the harp,
And Turlough O'Carolan's ten fingers bring us
Horses and swords, gold, wine, and victory."

ESTHER
Oh, that is eloquence!

SWIFT
I know their rhapsodies. But to O'Carolan:
He played, and drank full cups; made proper songs
In praise of banquets, wine-cups, and young maids—
Things easily praised. And then when he was old—

ESTHER
How old?

SWIFT
Two score of years and ten.

ESTHER
But that 's not old!

SWIFT
And that 's not old! Good God, how soon we grow
Into the Valley of the Shadow of Death!—
Not into the Valley, Vanessa, mark, of Death,
But into the shadow! Two score of years and ten—
Have we not three score and some more to live?
So has the tree that 's withered at the top—
Dead in the head! Aye, we, Vanessa, grow
Into the Shadow, and in the Shadow stay
So long!

ESTHER
I thought the story would divert Cadenus.

SWIFT
It will, it will, Vanessa. What was I
Just saying?

ESTHER
When he was old—

SWIFT
When he was old
And blind—did I say he was blind?

ESTHER
You did not say it.

SWIFT
He 's blind—not book-blind, but stone-blind.
He cannot see
The wen that makes two heads upon the fellow
That goes beside him, hunched up with the harp;
He cannot see
The Justice to the assizes riding
With soldiers all in red to give him state.
He cannot see
The beggar's lice and sores.

I tell a story:
When this O'Carolan was old and blind,
As I have said, he made the pilgrimage:
'Twas to . . . No, no, 'twas not the place
That I'm proscribed to, but yet one that 's called
Saint Patrick's Purgatory.

'Tis on an island in a lake, a low
Island or islet. The water round
Is dun, unsunned; there are no meadows near,
No willows grow, no lark nor linnet sings;
The banks there take a bleakness from the clouds.
A fissure in the island leads down to
The Purgatory of Souls, their fable says.

And now the Harper is but one of those,
The countless wretches, who have brought their sores
To that low island, and brought darkened spirits—
Such stream has flowed there for a thousand years.
I do not know
What length of time the Harper stays, while crowds
Are shambling all around him, weeping, praying,
Famishing themselves; or drinking the dun water
Of the lake for wine; or kneeling, with their knees
On sharpened stones; or crowded
In narrow, stony cells.

ESTHER
It is a place
Papistical.

SWIFT
It is a place
Most universal. Do we not walk
Upon a ground that 's drenched with tears, and breathe
An air that 's thickened with men's darkened spirits?
Aye, and on an islet,
Suffering pain, and hearing cries of wretches:
Cut off, remote, banished, alone, tormented!
Name the place as you will, or let it be
Saint Patrick's Purgatory.

But comes a time the blind man rows to shore
From that low island. He touches shore, and cries
"Hands for a blind man's help!" and hands were held him—
He touched a hand.

Here then 's the pastoral
The hand, the fingers of the hand, the clasp,
The spirit flowing through—he knew them all;

He knew all well, and in an instant knew them,
And he cried out, "The hand of Bridget Cruise!"

Oh, in the midmost of our darkened spirits
To touch a hand, and know the truth within it—
That truth that's clasped, that holds, the truth that 's all
For us—for every day we live, the truth!
To touch that hand, and then once more to turn—
To turn around upon the world's highway,
And go alone—poor hand, poor hand!

But she
This Bridget Cruise, was leaving that dull shore
For that low island, and had cares beyond
The memory of O'Carolan. Well, they passed,
He going and she coming; well, and then
He took his harp, and the country lout, his fellow,
Went with him, as we see them going now.

ESTHER
They 've passed: there is no one now beside us.
And will you take my hand? You used to
call me
A white witch, but there is no witchery
In this plain hand of mine!

You 've told a double story, Doctor Swift.

THE BIRD OF JESUS

IT was pure indeed,
The air we breathed in, the light we saw,
I and my brother, when we played that day,
Or piped to one another; then there came
Two young lads of an age with one another,
And with us two, and these two played with
us,
And went away.

Each had a bearing that was like a prince's,
Yet they were simple lads and had the kind-
ness
Of our own folk—lads simple and unknowing:
Then, afterwards, we went to visit them.

Theirs was a village that was not far off,
But out of reach—toward elbow, not toward hand:
And what was there were houses—
Houses and some trees—
And it was like a place within a fold.

We found the lads,
And found them still as simple and unknowing,
And played with them: we played outside the stall
Where worked the father of the wiser lad—
Not brothers were the boys, but cousins' children.

There was a pit:
We brought back clay and sat beside the stall,
And made birds out of clay; and then my brother
Took up his bird and flung it in the air:
His playmate did as he,
And clay fell down upon the face of clay.

And then I took
The shavings of the board the carpenter
Was working on, and flung them in the air,
And watched them streaming down.

There would be nought to tell
Had not the wiser of the lads took up
The clay he shaped: a little bird it was;
He tossed it from his hand up to his head:
The bird stayed in the air.

O what delight we had
To see it fly and pause, that little bird,
Sinking to earth sometimes, and sometimes rising
As though to fly into the very sun;
At last it spread out wings and flew, and flew,
Flew to the sun!

I do not think
That we played any more, or thought of playing,
For every drop of blood our bodies held
Was free and playing, free and playing then.
Four lads together on the bench we sat:
Nothing was in the open air around us,
And yet we thought something was there for us—
A secret, charmed thing.

So we went homeward; by soft ways we went
That wound us back to our familiar place.
Some increase lay upon the things we saw:
I 'll speak of grasses, but you 'll never know
What grass was there; words wither it and
make it
Like to the desert children's dream of grass;
Lambs in the grass, but I will not have told
you
What fleece of purity they had to show;
I 'll speak of birds, but I will not have told you
How their song filled the heart; and when I
speak
Of him, my brother, you will never guess
How we two were at one!

Even to our mother we had gained in grace!

THE LAMENTS OF QUEEN GORMLAI[5]

Thou art lone to-night and unlit; no more
than a cairn art thou
To the dead, O House of Kings!

Thou that didst have thy feasts, thou that
didst have thy glow,
Thou art lone to-night and unlit!

Every Kingdom must pass; one Kingdom, one only, endures!
Thou art lone to-night and unlit, and I am remembering Niall!

II

Din of a wedding there! To whomsoever it brings
Delight, there is one to whom each loud voice brings a grief:
O woman, handfasted, besought—the like my lot was once!

And Thou, the Giver of Dooms! Thou hast deserved from me
Reproach, why didst thou slay King Aedh's upright son?
Were he in captor's hands, gold and swift steeds would go
To ransom him, and more—all men's remembrances!
Were he in captor's hands, and then were he set free
Unransomed, 'twere the meed of all that he bestowed!

And I, what would I bring to ransom him who gave
Out of one spoil to me no less than twelve score kine?
White bed on which he lay—white bed to which would come
The men of Oriel—thou art now without thy pride!
A grief it is to me, white one, to see thee thus!
His tunic is beside, but he who made it brave
In Cenannas now lies, alone, and cold, and dead.

When once my hero went in battle from Armagh,
He said, "If one meet death, and one of us abide
What should the living do?" I answered him, "O King,
If one should meet with death, let both of us be brought
To share a single grave in Aileach's quiet ground."
"If thou, O Gormlai, be first that's laid in earth,
No woman will I take, no mirth henceforth I'll know."

III

Lift thy foot, take it away,
From my Niall's side, O Monk:
Too heavily thou heapest clay,
O Monk!

Too long, I think, thou hast been nigh,
Heaping clay on Niall's grave:
At his side I used to lie,
O Monk!

Too long has he, my bosom's friend,
Been in the dark, there where his feet
Do not reach the coffin's end,
Too long.

Not by my good will his head
Is underneath that cross you raise:
Nor that the flagstone on his bed
Is placed.

Like to Deirdre when she stood
Watching Naisi's burial,
Till her heart burst out in blood,
I stand.

I am Gormlai, she who made
Verses that the learned knew:
Would that upon me were laid
That stone.

Lift thy foot, take it away,
From my Niall's side, O Monk:
Too long hast thou been heaping clay:
Lift thy foot!

IV

A man's hound
Is given no credit where it's not been followed:
Outlandish and disturbing it will seem.

And one unloved—
Her presence draws affronts to corner and nook,
Even as the hound whose course has not been told.

Should I say
The raven's black, they 'll hurtle around my words:
White feathers they will throw into my face.

Be my walk
Crooked or straight, be it queenly or abased,
The Leinstermen will say it is my spite.

Bare yon hill
That 's had its copse stripped off; the shoulder 's bare
Where there is none to put an arm across.

Open 's the warp
Upon the gears—a tale they tell in this house—
Where children there are none to weave a strength.

As it 's with a man:
Out of all women he 's matched with only one;
And as a woman 's mated with one man.

So was Niall
The unstained King, the bounteous, upright man
A match for me, and I a match for him.

Long am I
In Muiregan's house: worn am I: I cannot
Abide with them, I with my broken days.

THE MIRACLE OF THE CORN*

People in the Legend:

FARDORROUGHA	A Farmer
SHEILA	Fardorrougha's wife
PAUDEEN	Fardorrougha's servant, a Fool
AISLINN	A child
THREE WOMEN	
SHAUN O' THE BOG	A Poor Man

The action passes in a Farmer's house in Ireland in the old times.

SCENE: *The interior of Fardorrougha's house. The door is at back R; the hearth L, the window R are only conventionally represented. What is actually shown is a bin for corn, shelves with vessels, benches, and a shrine. The bin projects from back C; the shelves with vessels are each side of the bin; the shrine is R; it holds a small statue of the Virgin; a rosary of large beads hangs from it; the benches are R and L. One is at the conventional fireplace,*

*Corn is used in the sense of any kind of grain—as it is used in Ireland and England—the bread-stuff and the symbol of fertility.

and the other is down from the conventional door.

All the persons concerned in the action are on the scene when it opens, and they remain on the scene. They only enter the action when they go up to where the bin is. Going back to the places they had on the benches takes them out of the action.

On the bench near the hearth sit the people of Fardorrougha's household—Fardorrougha, Sheila, Paudeen, Aislinn. On the bench near the door sit the strangers—three women, one of whom has a child with her, and Shaun o' the Bog. The people are dressed in greys and browns, and brown is the color of the interior. The three women and Shaun o' the Bog are poorly dressed; the women are barefooted. Paudeen is dressed rudely, and sandals of hide are bound across his feet. Fardorrougha, Sheila, and Aislinn are comfortably dressed.

PAUDEEN

They 're moaning still:
The cattle are a long time moaning now,
Day in, day out; and will they never stop
Their moaning, Master Fardorrougha?

FARDORROUGHA
We could drive the cows
To another place, but the house would not be safe
While we were gone; Paudeen, you know
There are those outside who would break in my door.

PAUDEEN
Aye, the people
Are bad from want. They 're worse off than the cattle:
The people have to watch
The black rain and it falling all the day.

FARDORROUGHA
We 've hay
For our own cows; give them a lock
Of what the widow of Seumas saved.

PAUDEEN
Is it the hay
That's under the hurdles behind the hedge?

FARDORROUGHA
That hay:
She put lean beasts upon me, and she owes me
Their fattening.

(*Paudeen goes back to his place on the bench. Aislinn comes to the bin.*)

FARDORROUGHA
What child is this?

AISLINN
Aislinn is my name.

FARDORROUGHA
Who was it
Gave you that name? It is strange to name
Anyone Dream!

AISLINN
My own people
Gave me that name. And now you'll wonder
What brings me to your house. Sheila, your
wife,
Has brought me here to keep her company.

FARDORROUGHA
And you are welcome. There are no young
ones here.

AISLINN
I am well used
To doing things about a house, and I
Can sweep the floor, and put the fire down,
And mind the children.

FARDORROUGHA
There are no children in the house you've
come to:
Are you
Afeard of me?

AISLINN
No, Fardorrougha, I'm not afeard.

FARDORROUGHA
You are like
The brown bird in the cage, Aislinn.

AISLINN
What has Sheila
Upon her altar? I would like to see:
It is the image of the Mother of God!
O why will the rain,
Dear Mother of God, keep falling? It de-
stroyed
The crop, before the crop was out of the
ground;
Why will the black rain keep falling now?

(*Fardorrougha goes back to the bench. Sheila goes to Aislinn.*)

SHEILA
It is the will of God.

AISLINN
God's will is set
Against us all; it is against
The cattle in the field, and it was they
Stood by His crib; they're moaning always now:
He has forgotten them.

SHEILA
Do not be listening to
The cattle moaning; do not be watching
The black rain and it falling all the day.

AISLINN
You God has not forgotten.

SHEILA
God has not forgotten
Me, Aislinn.

AISLINN
If He has left
Your fields to the rain, He knows that you
Have a good roof and riches under it.

SHEILA
To have them is no sign
That God remembers one: I used to look
Upon my roof and riches, and yet say
"You have forgotten me, Almighty God!"

AISLINN
And could you say,
When there was corn, "You have forgotten me,
Almighty God?"

SHEILA
And when I would look
Upon my fields and they heavy with the grain,
"You have remembered the furrows," I would say,
"And they are fruitful, but you have forgotten
Me, Almighty God!"

And now,
Now when the furrows are forgotten, He,
He has remembered me. O Aislinn, child,
Your arms put round me—I would have you near:
I want
Your face before me; I would have a face
Like yours, but glad; a child's face glad and bright!

(*Paudeen goes to the bin and opens it.*)

PAUDEEN
That's empty, and that will take some filling,
too;
That's empty, and it will hold an apron-full;
That's empty, and you can put more
Than a cap-full in it.

SHEILA
What are you doing at the bin, Paudeen?

PAUDEEN
Making it ready to put corn in it.
"Better have the corn in the bin," says he,
"Than in the barn, after what happened
Last night in the barn," says he.

SHEILA
What was it happened?

PAUDEEN
"And only Gorav," says he,
"Only Gorav, the good dog, got the man by
the throat,
There would be a thief in the parish and a
wronged man," says he.

SHEILA
The hard, hard man.

PAUDEEN

"There's a good door to my house," says he,
"And the bin's within for corn; and if the priest," says he,
Can't put the fear of God into the people,
Gorav, maybe, can," says he.

That's empty, that's empty, that's empty.

(*Paudeen goes back to his place on the bench.*)

SHEILA

He has all
The corn that's in the country, and he sets
Brutes to guard it. The people bring their cattle
Before he gives them corn to keep them living.

AISLINN

I'm not afeared
Of Fardorrougha.

SHEILA

He is not set
In hardness yet; he'll give back
In arm-fulls what he took in his hands!

AISLINN

Will it be long till then,
Woman of Fardorrougha?

SHEILA
Not long, not long:
The fruit is ripening that will bring him to
Himself; O Aislinn, do not think
Too hardly of my man; there was no child
About our house, Aislinn!

(*Fardorrougha goes to the bin, bringing with him a bag of corn.*)

FARDORROUGHA
Woman of the house, be careful that you put
The big bolt on the door when it gets dark.

SHEILA
Let it not come
Between you and your rest, Fardorrougha.

FARDORROUGHA
I grudge
To give them corn even for what they bring
me.

SHEILA
Look at Aislinn here:
Would you not let it all go with the wind
To have a child like Aislinn for your own?

FARDORROUGHA
Woman, content yourself
With what is given.

SHEILA
God has given
House and mill, and land and riches, but not
Content.

FARDORROUGHA
Then let what is not
Trouble us not.

SHEILA
Aislinn was with me all the day; Aislinn
Will fill a bin for you. Aislinn, take
A measure off the dresser, and help Fardor-
rougha
Empty the sack.

FARDORROUGHA
Aislinn! It was a woman surely
That named her Dream.

SHEILA
She is a biddable child, and one that's good
About a house.

FARDORROUGHA
She'll have no need
To do much while she's here.

SHEILA
And isn't it well, Fardorrougha,
To see a child that isn't white-faced?

FARDORROUGHA
The corn into the bin!

SHEILA
Isn't it a comfort
To see a child like Aislinn here? Then think
Of a glad, bright child!

FARDORROUGHA
I have no thought
To go that far. That world, woman,
The world of bud and blossom, has gone by:
There's only now,
The ragged sky, the poor and wasted ground,
The broken-spirited ones—the people
Like you, and me, and Paudeen.

SHEILA
No, Fardorrougha, no.

FARDORROUGHA
The world of bud and blossom has gone by.

SHEILA
No, Fardorrougha.
Listen to me, Fardorrougha!

FARDORROUGHA
Well, my woman.

SHEILA
I have something,
Fardorrougha, to tell to you.

FARDORROUGHA
And I am listening, woman.

(*Paudeen goes to the bin.*)

PAUDEEN
Shaun o' the Bog is on the pass
Before the barn.

FARDORROUGHA
Before the barn? Is it me he wants?

PAUDEEN
It's for the woman
Of the house he's asking. "Is she by herself?"
Says he to me.

FARDORROUGHA
She's not by herself, if that's the chance
He's seeking. You, Sheila;
There's something else you would have said, maybe,
"Loose the corn you've gathered." Let you not,
Or the harsh word that has not been, will be
Between us.

I'll see the man, and if he wants to make it
A bargain that is fair, it's with myself
That he must talk.

(*Fardorrougha goes back to the bench. Paudeen has some hay in his hands. He has taken it from under where he sat.*)

PAUDEEN
Where did he say
I was to put the hay I got under the hedge?

SHEILA
Where the cows are. O
How can your mind keep on the hay? I know:
It is because you're simple! Or so they say.
Paudeen,
Why do they call you a fool? Why
Do they call him a fool, Aislinn?

AISLINN
It is because
His mind keeps on the one thing only.

SHEILA
He can see only
The hay that's in his hands. But then
They are all foolish! Paudeen, they that
gathered

Many thoughts while in the womb are foolish
now
As you are.

PAUDEEN
But you said
I was a clean, well-built boy, anyhow,
Woman of the house.

SHEILA
Yes, I said it.

(*Paudeen goes back to the bench.*)

AISLINN
I'm not afeard
Of Fardorrougha: I do not think him hard.

SHEILA
His heart opened to you.

AISLINN
He knows that I
Am not afeard of him.

SHEILA
His heart opened to you, and that's a sign:
Yes, that's a sign I take.

AISLINN
And do you think that he would ever give
The harsh word to you?

SHEILA
O Aislinn, pray:
Pray that it will never come to that; the thought
Of the harsh word has come to me,
Again and again, like some dark bird.

AISLINN
And have you never had
The harsh word from him?

SHEILA
But now
The harsh word would be the end of all.
Listen to me! Outside 's the rain:
The desolation of the rain is near me:
If he gave me
The harsh word, the rain, the desolation
Would be all round me, and what fruit could be?
O glad, bright child of my dream! Apple blossom!
What fruit would you, tender and shining, make
And the tree of you with desolation round it?

(*The three women leave the bench and come to the bin. One has a child with her.*)

SHEILA
What can I do for you, women?

FIRST WOMAN
We have eaten
Only nettles and roots since the want came:
Our children droop.

SECOND WOMAN
You do not know what it is
To see a child droop.

THIRD WOMAN
God has not opened
Doors of madness and pain for you.

(*Sheila takes a vessel and holds it to a child who drinks.*)

FIRST WOMAN
Do not forget my child.

SHEILA
Take
What is in my house, women.

(*She opens the bin and fills a woman's apron with corn. The other women hold out their aprons. Sheila fills them.*)

First Woman
May God
Heap up store for you, and may you have
Clan with store.

Second Woman
May God be with your husband when his
hand
Scatters the seed, and may his labor be
Prosperous!

Third Woman
And may your own labor be
Light, and watched by the Mother of God!

Sheila
Women, who am I
That ye should pray for me!

(*The women go to the bench. Sheila stands quiet. Aislinn goes to her.*)

Aislinn
Now there is no more
O' the corn.

Sheila
But God will have love
And pity for us.

AISLINN
The bins are emptied—will Fardorrougha
. . .?

SHEILA
O hush!
There is the cattle's moan; here is Paudeen
Who brings them hay—Paudeen who is
With the broken things! My heart is heavy
again!

AISLINN
Fardorrougha . . .

SHEILA
Fardorrougha! I had forgotten him:
God protect me!

The rain, the rain! The black and ragged
sky,
The poor and wasted ground—how could
there be
Any but Paudeen's like.

(*Paudeen goes to the bin.*)

PAUDEEN
But you said
I was a clean and well-built boy yourself.

SHEILA
I said it. And now, Paudeen,
Open the bins.

(*Paudeen lets down the fronts of the bin and it is shown to be empty.*)

PAUDEEN
O what will we tell
Fardorrougha? Can any of you think
Of a story to tell him?

SHEILA
We can tell him
No story at all.

AISLINN
But we might
Keep him from the bin.

SHEILA
No, Aislinn, no:
No good would be in that.

It was the right I did. Their children now
Around them crowd. O children, I would
give
Bread to you, again and over again!

I, too,
Was one of them who had their minds upon
The one thing only; I hardened
To make things easy for myself. It is not
"God protect me," I should be saying now,
But "God forgive me."

(*Shaun o' the Bog comes from the bench. He goes to the bins.*)

SHAUN
Fardorrougha told me
To wait upon him here.

SHEILA
And what has Fardorrougha
Promised to you, Shaun?

SHAUN
The corn in the bins. And I have given
My wool and loom to him.

SHEILA
He has not what he thinks he has, but you
Will not go empty for all that.

SHAUN
It is well for Aislinn,
The child that's with you in this house.

SHEILA
Aislinn, go talk to Shaun; he need not be
Anxious nor fretted.

AISLINN
Nor need you be
Anxious nor fretted, Sheila.

SHEILA
I am not anxious any more, Aislinn.

(*Fardorrougha goes to the bin.*)

FARDORROUGHA
The corn is here that I will give you, Shaun,
For wool and loom; open you the bin,
And see how much is in it.

(*Shaun opens the bin. A very great quantity of corn gushes out.*)

FARDORROUGHA
I did not think
So much was there. He'll not get all
For wool and loom; I will not wrong myself;
As much as half is fair.

(*He turns to the bin and sees that Shaun, Sheila and Aislinn are kneeling beside the heap of corn.*)

FARDORROUGHA
Why are you kneeling, Shaun?

SHAUN
I kneel because I know
My children will be fed.

FARDORROUGHA
Why are you kneeling, Sheila?

SHEILA
I kneel because I know
The fields will break to corn because of the love,
And pity God has for us.

FARDORROUGHA
Why are you kneeling, Aislinn?

AISLINN
I kneel because I know
A miracle has happpened; Sheila need not dread
The harsh word from you any more or never.

FARDORROUGHA
An air comes from it all—a smell of growing,
Green, growing corn; and I mind that I
Brought Sheila from her mother's to this house

Across a field of corn that smelled sweet, sweet,
And whispered lovingly. I'm greatly changed,
And often I am strange even to myself.
What good's in what I've gathered? It's between
Myself and her; but when she rises now
Nothing will be between us; at what she'll say
All I have gathered I shall give away.

(*With Sheila, Aislinn, and Shaun still kneeling the scene closes.*)

NOTES

1. The Rune Master

Kuno Meyer died in Germany in the autumn of 1919. In the poem written on the announcement of his death, his translation of the dialogue between King Guire and his hermit brother Maravaun ("King and Hermit") is referred to, with his translation of "The Voyage of Bran" and one of the poems in his "Ancient Irish Poetry" called "The Tryst after Death."

2. Wandering and Sojourning

The two poems given under this title are translations from the Irish: The first, "Spring," is from the Irish of Raftery, a Connacht poet of the eighteenth century, and the second, "Autumn," is a versification of a passage in Kuno Meyer's translation of a mediaeval tale.

3. The Poor Girl's Meditation

The original and a literal translation are given by Dr. Douglas Hyde in his "Love Songs of Connacht."

4. The Wife of Tone

This and the two pieces that follow were written for famous Irish airs—the first to the beautiful melody that is known as "The Londonderry Air," and the other two to the airs that give titles to them. "The Fair Hills of Eire" freely translates the first and last stanzas of the famous eighteenth century poem of exile, and "Shall I Go Bound and You Go Free" is derived from the first line of a folk song that is given in one of Mr. Herbert Hughes' collections. The words of "The Wife of Tone" paraphrase what the wife of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the leader of the United Irishmen, wrote in her journal on her parting with her son; in accordance with her husband's wish he had been brought up to take service with an army that was engaged in a war of national liberation.

5. The Laments of Queen Gormlai

These are renderings of four out of the eleven "Poems Attributed to Queen Gormlaith," text and literal translations of which have been given by Professor Osborn Bergin. The poem on the burial of Niall has been nobly translated by Dr. Sigerson in his "Bards of the Gael and Gall" and by Dr. Douglas Hyde in his "Literary History of Ireland." The poems are in lamentation for the death of Niall Black-knee and for her own state of dependence in a Leinster household, away from her husband's Ulster kingdom. Niall Black-knee was killed near Dublin, in a battle with the Norse in 917. His wife Gormlaith lived for thirty-one years after his death. Professor Bergin declares that if the poems were actually written by Gormlaith they were altered afterward.

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